

**Meeting of the
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Thelma Keller Convention Center, 1202 N. Keller Dr., Effingham, IL
July 12, 2019
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
MINUTES**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS	STAFF
Gladys Boyd	Katy Cotts	Lindsey Arnold	Steve Bradford
Arrelida Hall	Susan McConnell	Patrick Barberousse	Barbara Crandall
Rachel Hoyt	Kate Monte	Tina Bilzing	Hope Carbonaro
Ken Keefe	Rachel Pruess	Leslie Boyd	Thelma Carter
Harriet Kersh		Julie Cebulski	Gwenn Eyer
Maya Maclin		Claudia Dancy Davis	Gail Mayer
Kellye Norris		Deonte King	Cindy McCleary
Mary Savage		Patricia Pride	Beth Unkraut
Carol Sheley		Krista Teckenbrock	Doug Washington
Samella Taylor-Lewis		Barb Troxel	
Stephanie Tesreau			

Welcome and Introductions

Carol Sheley

SWFCAC Chairperson Carol Sheley welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:05 a.m. and council members and guests introduced themselves.

Final Report to the Director

Carol Sheley

There were no final reports to the Director. The monthly Director's Report was submitted as required by law.

Approve SWFCAC Minutes from 6/21/19

Harriet Kersh made the motion to approve the minutes from the June 21, 2019 SWFCAC meeting. Mary Savage seconded, and the motion carried.

Southern Region Welcome and Report

Hope Carbonaro

Hope welcomed the council to her home area. She has spent almost 30 years in child welfare, the last 11 years with Caritas, before moving to DCFS in 2016. She has been a strong advocate for children and families throughout the state. She stated that she is thankful for the opportunity to serve as Southern Regional Administrator, noting that she is honored to do this work. Hope believes in the work. She stated that when people have been involved for a long time it's easy to become cynical or disappointed with the system, but she reminded the council and guests that it is an honor to stand in the gap for children and families. She indicated that she still gets calls from adults she was involved with during their youth. She said that she has known Director

Smith for a while, due to her involvement in the private sector. Hope said that she accepted the RA position with Director Walker, a short time before the Director left the agency.

Director Smith recently traveled to Southern Region to visit offices and speak to staff there. Hope stated that the Director is knowledgeable about the Department and child welfare, is calm and compassionate, and that he handles issues with grace and confidence. She said that he hit the ground running and he is taking us back to our roots around safety. We still have new things we want to try, but we are in the business of safety, first. We need to focus and prioritize rather than starting so many new things. The immersion sites continue where they are using the Core Practice Model and the new model for Child & Family Team meetings. The new model really utilizes the family voice, engages foster parents early in the life of the case, and promotes mutual respect for the birth parent and foster parent. Hope recognizes that sometimes staff needs to be more committed to building that team. We still have trouble shedding the old layers to clear the path for a new beginning. We need to refresh the commitment to engagement, getting away from compliance issues and checkboxes.

Hope said that the Department has a lot of new staff. The workforce crisis is real and as we bring up new generations of staff we need to ensure that we give them the tools required to do the work. Southern Region is still looking for caregiving resources, even for young children and sibling groups. They are still placing children in shelters. Director Smith has taken a new approach and there's been some restructuring to position some people to really focus on the resource crisis. We are renewing the focus on recruitment. They are looking at capacity for residential centers and shelters and utilizing them as treatment facilities. The Department supports maintaining the foster parents' engagement with these youth, providing for their therapeutic needs and returning home. In meeting with the Governor's Office, it was the first time the Department put a budget forward and they were offered more money. There is an increase for private sector, for new staff for the Department, for building up the investigations team and possibly for more intact workers. Desiree Silva is the new Operations Director. She brings a new energy and focus to the work. Hope sincerely thanked the council members and audience for their work and dedication to children and families.

Discussion:

- Are expedited waivers still available? The waiver process is in place. The request must go to the Clinical Unit, there is a visit the foster home and the Director signs off. RA's could do provisional waivers, but that has been pulled back, at least for now, while they look at writing policy with a clear structure for completion.
- A foster parent suggested that the state should offer a region-to-region respite exchange to expose youth to a wider portion of the world. This could be a format like foreign exchange students placed for short terms. City youth could go to the Southern Region where they would have space to run and explore. Hope acknowledged the idea, noting that RA's have calls every week with Desi and most RA's are new to the position, so building the team and building resources is a priority.

Legislative Report

Alexa Koziol

Alexa provided a written report detailing the following:

SB 1743 (Peters/Edly-Allen) DCFS Foster Care Survey

Amends the Children and Family Services Act. Requires the Department of Children and Family Services, in coordination with specified entities, to develop and process a standardized survey to gather feedback from children who are aging out of foster care and from children who have transitioned out of the foster care system. Sent to Governor for signature.

SB 1808 (Peters/Robinson) DCFS-Transitioning Youth

Amends the Children and Family Services Act. Provides that in order to intercept and divert youth in care from experiencing homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, and other similar outcomes the Department of Children and Family Services and several specified agencies shall enter into an interagency agreement for the purpose of providing preventive services to youth in care and young adults who are aging-out of or have recently aged out of the custody or guardianship of the Department. Effective immediately. Sent to Governor for signature.

HB 2304 (Slaughter/Martinez) DHS-Building Trades Program

Amends the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Law of the Civil Administrative Code of Illinois. Provides that subject to appropriation, the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity may establish a Training in the Building Trades Program (Program) to award grants to community-based organizations for the purpose of establishing training programs for persons who are 18 through 35 years of age and have an interest in the building trades. Provides that persons eligible to participate in the Program shall include youth who have aged out of foster care and have an interest in the building trades. Effective January 1, 2020. Sent to Governor for signature.

HB 2571 (Feigenholtz/Steans) Residential Treatment Minors

Amends Child Care Act. The FFPSA changed the definition of a foster family home by reducing the number of children allowed in a foster home, while expanding the provisions for waivers or exceptions. The FFPSA also issued National Model Foster Family Home Licensing Standards, which include requiring applicants to provide an additional reference from a family member. This bill amends the Illinois Child Care Act to mirror the federal legislation. The FFPSA also impacts the Department's ability to seek reimbursement related to children placed in residential care. The FFPSA created a new category of "Qualified Residential Treatment Programs" or "QRTP's", with additional criteria, including the requirement that a Court overseeing a minor's case must make specific findings regarding the need for the placement in order to qualify for federal reimbursement. This bill amends the Juvenile Court Act to comply with the FFPSA. Sent to Governor for signature.

Family First Prevention Act

Gail Mayer

Gail described the basic components of the act which provides expanded funding for the Department using federal funds. They will provide In-home Parent Skill-Based training for up to one year. It restricts Title 4E funds for youth that are not in foster homes. It will boost efforts for substance abuse programs, allows for one-time grants, etc. They are updating 402, changes applications for licensure, changes qualifications for sleeping arrangements, ages and number of children being served, etc. The Director is looking for people to serve on a Family First subcommittee, requesting one from IFAPA and one from SWFCAC. In-person meetings will be held in Chicago, approximately every two weeks at 1911 South Indiana in Chicago. Gladys Boyd will represent IFAPA, and council volunteers include Stephanie Tesreau, Ken Keefe and Carol Sheley. Carol Sheley, SWFCAC chairperson, will represent the Council.

Conference Discussion

Gwenn Eyer

Gwenn noted that the April 12, 2019 meeting minutes indicated that the Council wanted to make a recommendation to the Director regarding hosting a conference or institutes. Discussion:

- Gladys stated that IFAPA has already made arrangement for a hotel, secured the state rate, etc. IFAPA's target number is 500-600, with training appropriate to the current needs of children in care.
- Arrelda stated that most foster parents are willing to pay for their own lodging, utilizing shared rooms, when possible.
- Offer a 1-1/2-day training institute allowing time in the evening for a networking event. Parents could still pay for their own lodging for that night. That will allow up to 12 hours of training plus networking.
- It's harder to find a sitter for a whole conference than for 1-1/2-days.
- It makes more sense to have regional conferences. Networking is more impactful when with foster parents within your region.
- Include RA's and staff from each region.
- Include SWFCAC presentations in each region, building relationships between regional councils and the SWFCAC.
- We have had the joint conference for many years.
- Child care should be offered at/for the Conference.
- We will plan far enough ahead to allow families to arrange day care.
- Dinner speakers may include the Director.
- Does the audience want to hear the Director or Regional Administrators, or the Director and/or the Governor?
- We have offered Regional Breakouts in the past.
- The state conference allows presenters to speak in one voice.
- Courts vary from region to region, so the differences should be addressed.
- IFAPA is statewide, and represents the state of Illinois, and the chapter is located in Chicago. There is not a sub-region outside Chicago, Arrelda and Gladys work in Chicago. They are looking at building it up and gaining members. They continue to wait for support from the national organization to organize and build membership. Meetings are not being held now.
- IFAPA is a grassroots organization that represents Illinois foster parents. It is not part of the Department. In the past, it has been a strong organization with a paid lobbyist and a strong voice within the state.
- If they could start looking at the conference as a family reunion, caregivers can gather to attend training, then do regional breakouts.
- How will the funds best be used to serve the foster parent community?
- People in Southern Illinois won't attend conferences in Chicago. The middle of the state is preferred for the location.

Consensus:

The council will recommend to the Director that we offer a Friday, Saturday and Sunday Training Conference for caregivers.

Daycare

Doug Washington and Steve Bradford

Doug's role is Acting Deputy Director of Contract Administration, responsible for day care licensing in collaboration with the regional offices. Steve Bradford is the Central Region contract administrator. Anything related to day care services, payment for day care, and providers, whether licensed or unlicensed, comes under their purview. The Department has acknowledged day care as being appropriate and available. Guidelines and instructions were distributed.

Discussion:

- The worker is amazing in Southern Region. In addition to the packet that must go out, the number of day cares are limited. One family used one day care, but due to special needs needed to change providers. The new provider allowed the family of four children to utilize day care services without payment for six months. It was noted that this jeopardizes the relationship between the parent and the provider.
- We need to figure out a process that simplifies the turn-around time for new provider licenses, making it more user-friendly.
- Create a checklist for parents and providers to move things along.
- Limited resources are available.
- They are looking at simplifying the process and limiting the amount of necessary paperwork.
 - They have simplified the application process, per Public Act 100.08.60. The application is easily accessible.
 - They have made it user-friendly.
- It was requested that foster parents could hand deliver the application to their Social Service Community Planners.
- Day Care accessibility does not stop.
- Distributing information to the foster parents is done through the worker.
- The Department works hand-in-hand with DHS.
- They are considering establishing a Statewide Administrator.
- The blanket contract provides the opportunity to look at the provider's education / qualifications to determine their rate of pay.
- There is set service criteria for application. To justify the use of state funds they must have certain criteria.
 - Employed full time or part time
 - In school full time or part time
 - In training program, full time or part time
 - They don't need financial records, paycheck audits, etc.
- If matters get to Doug's level, they need to be resolved expeditiously.
- It's possible that more people would adopt if day care coverage would continue past three years of age. The Department understands that this is an area of concern. Director Walker made one exception to allow day care for an adoptive family. Current policy and procedure limits what can be done for children ages 3-5. The School Readiness program is being challenged to identify additional resources. Doug will talk to Kelly King about what to do about adopted children in that age range and how to identify available programming prior to adoption. They will be working with Erica Cabrera and Mary Beth Corrigan in the School Readiness program about pre-planning prior to adoption. Doug noted that this could be addressed through a formal or informal process.

- They tried to change the process a few years ago. Other options and avenues were provided, but it was their understanding that it wasn't supposed to be a statewide child care policy change, but rather a one-time variance. They worked together to determine the final plan and get it all in writing.
- The key thing to address this issue is to look at the Early Childhood Initiative and School Readiness program. Erickson Institute is part of the early childhood development piece. This should be addressed as part of building the subsidy packet. Therapeutic day care is addressed. This should be written in the subsidy. Key individuals could take it to the Director to be addressed. Doug will try to gather more information to clarify this issue.
- Day care is provided for older children to age 21, under special circumstances.

Doug asked council members and guests to share the information they received today with their local providers and stakeholders. They want their work to be efficient, competent and successful. Contact Doug Washington at Douglas.Washington@illinois.gov or his direct line is 312-328-2658. Contact Ana Gonzalez, his assistant, at Ana.Gonzalez@illinois.gov or 312-328-2567. Contact Steve Bradford at 217-785-5250 or Steve.Bradford@illinois.gov.

Regional Reports

Northern Region – No one was in attendance to report from the Northern Region.

Central Region – Carol reported that a regional council member approached her about a child being placed in a foster home for more than two years, birth parent has identified an out-of-state relative that the child has never met as a resource. Julie indicated that she would address it. The council will send an issue form to Gail.

Cook North – No one was in attendance from Cook North.

Cook Central – Arrelida requested that policy committee review and clarify the interpretation of the 10-day notice policy. The council chairperson made the assignment.

Cook South – June meeting was cancelled and the next meeting date is July 16.

Cook County will hold a toy giveaway on July 17 for children ages three to twelve at the former White Sox Park. They are hosting in conjunction with the toy manufacturer and the State Guardian's office on the event. They are working on their Christmas toy drive with foster parents and children. They have started distributing new forms for this year.

Southern – No meeting has been held since the June SWFCAC meeting. Their next meeting is scheduled on July 23.

Committee Reports:

CWAC – Rachel Hoyt and Mary Savage reported that CWAC has not met since the last SWFCAC meeting.

Healthcare Committee - Kate Monte will be added to the Healthcare Committee.

Training and Development - Harriet Kersh

The Office of Education and Professional Development is working on creating training on DD, autism, mental health and behavioral issues. The Training Committee's goal is to work their way up so that as training comes through the pipeline they will have the opportunity to review it. They are still trying to receive PRIDE training for review, but Veronica Sanchez is not ready to share until others have reviewed.

Respite - Gladys Boyd reported that the Respite Committee did not meet.

Policy/Legislative Committee Report - Ken Keefe and Stephanie Tesreau

Stephanie presented Alexa's legislative report earlier in the meeting. Ken reported on the 402-revision draft that came out in response to the federal Family First changes. He reviewed the previous recommendations that were impacted by the federal language along with the committee's response.

Discussion:

- 1) There is new language that states that swimming pools must be equipped with lifesaving devices. The committee determined that they needed to add the example statement from the federal standards, referencing a lifesaving buoy.
- 2) The operation of businesses on premises where children are living shall not interfere with the care of the child or endanger the health, safety and welfare of the child. The supervising agency must know and approve of any business operation. Proposed Revision: The operation of other business enterprises on the premises shall not endanger the health, safety or welfare of a youth in care. Discussion included the following:
 - a. If the notification piece is removed, how do workers know that people will be coming in and out of the home? Employees should be background-checked.
 - b. The agency would not necessarily need to "approve" the operation.
 - c. Foster parents should notify the supervising agency
- 3) They changed the requirement from at least three references in the initial licensing process and the new proposed text is at least three people with at least one related to the applicant. Change to "no more than one related, including fictive kin."
- 4) The original text requires consents for a foster child before they participate in a work program, joining the military, etc. Remove driving a car and car ownership because those aspects are covered under normalcy.
- 5) Records that foster families are required to maintain should be revised.

Rachel Hoyt made the motion to move the revised recommendation to the Director. It was seconded by Stephanie Tesreau and the motion carried. Ken will send the report to Gail for submission.

Foster Parent Support Specialist Committee

Arrelida will chair the Foster Parent Support Specialist Committee due to Denise Spires' resignation from the council.

Hospitality and Marketing Committee - They will reorganize and Stephanie Tesreau will serve as the chairperson.

IFAPA – Gladys Boyd

IFAPA did not meet, but they are attending foster parent meetings in the Chicago area to build membership and discuss the conference. They are collecting training topics. They are in the process of updating a membership application. They are looking at avenues to recruit foster parents. They currently do not have a formal application to be completed.

MOTION: *Rachel made the motion to accept the amended policy committee recommendation and move it forward to the Policy Division. Stephanie Tesreau seconded and the motion carried.*

Stakeholder Comments - None

Public Comment - None.

MOTION: *Stephanie Tesreau made the motion to adjourn. Gladys Boyd seconded and the meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.*

Next Meeting: September 20, 2019 in the Central Region.

Potential Agenda Items:

Committee Breakouts for council goals and outcomes

Professionalism presentation/binder distribution

Mary Beth Corrigan, DCFS early childhood specialist

Post Adoption Administrator re: day care for adoption over 3 years old for the joint meeting

School Readiness

Doug Washington and Steve Bradford, Contracts